

OAHU, HAWAII · 2026 EDITION

PCS Home Guide for Military Families

Buying, selling or keeping your home on Oahu: VA loans, BAH, bases and neighborhoods, timelines and checklists.

COLDWELL BANKER | ISLAND PROPERTIES

THE SALAZAR GROUP
PREMIER ISLAND HOMES HAWAII

Lester A. Salazar, RB-23849
REALTOR® | Broker and Team Leader
Office (808) 204-HOME (4663)

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Illustrations are conceptual drawings

WELCOME

Welcome to Oahu, or a smooth send-off

Whether your orders bring you to Oahu or take you away from it, this guide walks you through the housing decision step by step: use your VA loan, budget around your BAH, pick a neighborhood that fits your commute, and decide whether to sell or keep your home when you leave.

Find your path

ARRIVING ON OAHU

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LEAVING OAHU

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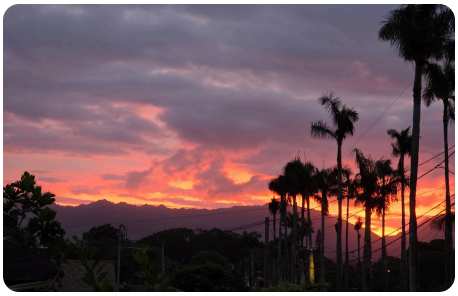
Every figure carries its source and date. Rates, allowances and laws change, so confirm current numbers with your lender, your installation housing office, and a CPA before you decide.

How we help military families

We help military families buy and sell across Oahu, from Central Oahu near Schofield Barracks and Wheeler to Ewa, Kapolei, Aiea, Pearl City and the Windward side. We can meet by video, write offers by e-signature, and coordinate a remote closing if you are still overseas or on the mainland.



Mililani Mauka entrance, Central Oahu. Photo: Who8myfish?, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons.


Sunset over the Wai'anae Range from Royal Palm Drive, Wahiawa. Photo: Lester A. Salazar.


The Ko'olau Range, Windward Oahu. Photo: Lester A. Salazar.

The Salazar Group | Premier Island Homes Hawaii · Coldwell Banker Island Properties
Mililani Town Center, 95-1249 Meheula Pkwy, Suite D16, Mililani, HI 96789
Office (808) 204-HOME (4663) · Lester@TheSalazarGroupHawaii.com

VA LOAN BASICS

Buy with no down payment and no VA loan limit

With full VA entitlement you can buy on Oahu with no down payment and no VA loan limit, as long as you qualify for the payment and the home appraises.

What the VA loan does for you

- **No set loan limit with full entitlement.** The lender still approves you on credit, income, debts and assets, and the appraisal must support the price.
- **No monthly mortgage insurance.** Most borrowers instead pay a one-time VA funding fee, paid at closing or added to the loan.
- **Still have a VA loan on another home?** VA uses the county conforming loan limit to figure your remaining entitlement. Honolulu County's 2026 one-unit limit is **$1,249,125**.

Sources: VA.gov, VA home loan limits; FHFA, 2026 conforming loan limits; ASB Hawaii county table. Accessed Nov. 24, 2026.

VA funding fee on a purchase

Down payment	First use	After first use
Less than 5%	2.15%	3.3%
5% or more	1.5%	1.5%
10% or more	1.25%	1.25%

Source: VA.gov, funding fee and closing costs (rate chart effective April 7, 2023). The fee is figured on the loan amount, not the price.

> **What it means:** an $800,000 loan with 0% down on first use carries a $17,200 fee ($800,000 × 0.0215). A partial-entitlement buyer's remaining room starts at $1,249,125 × 0.25, minus entitlement already used; ask your lender to run it from your COE.

You pay no funding fee if you receive VA disability compensation for a service-connected condition (or qualify for it but receive retirement or active-duty pay instead), are a surviving spouse receiving DIC, have a proposed or memorandum rating issued before closing, or are on active duty and show evidence of a Purple Heart on or before closing. Your COE shows whether you are exempt.

Your VA loan steps

1. Request your Certificate of Eligibility (COE) through VA.gov or your lender.
2. Get pre-approved with a VA-experienced lender; send us the letter.
3. Tour homes in person or by live video and write an offer.
4. Order inspections; the VA appraisal also checks VA Minimum Property Requirements.
5. Close in person, by mail-away signing, or with a power of attorney.
6. Plan to move in: VA loans generally require that you intend to occupy the home. Ask your lender how this applies to your report date.

BAH ON OAHU

One BAH rate covers the whole island

All of Oahu is one military housing area, Honolulu County (HI408), so your BAH is the same in Mililani, Ewa Beach or Kailua. In 2026 an E-5 with dependents receives $3,663 a month and an O-3 with dependents $4,428.

Grade	With dep.	Without
E-1 to E-4	$3,333	$2,598
E-5	$3,663	$2,856
E-6	$3,912	$3,036
E-7	$4,098	$3,348
E-8	$4,302	$3,720
E-9	$4,518	$3,783
W-1	$3,930	$3,222
W-2	$4,182	$3,717
W-3	$4,434	$3,795
W-4	$4,551	$3,951
W-5	$4,692	$4,146

Grade	With dep.	Without
O-1E	$4,137	$3,660
O-2E	$4,398	$3,768
O-3E	$4,572	$3,903
O-1	$3,702	$2,997
O-2	$3,909	$3,555
O-3	$4,428	$3,819
O-4	$4,737	$4,110
O-5	$4,959	$4,224
O-6	$5,001	$4,413
O-7 and above	$5,040	$4,494

Source: 2026 monthly BAH, Honolulu County (HI408), from DoD Defense Travel Management Office rate files as tabulated by FedRateCalc, accessed Nov. 24, 2026. Confirm your rate by ZIP code with the official DoD BAH calculator.

What it means: BAH rose about 4 to 5% from 2025 for every grade (E-5 with dependents went from $3,513 to $3,663, +$150). Rates reset each calendar year, so check the new rate before you lock a budget for 2027.

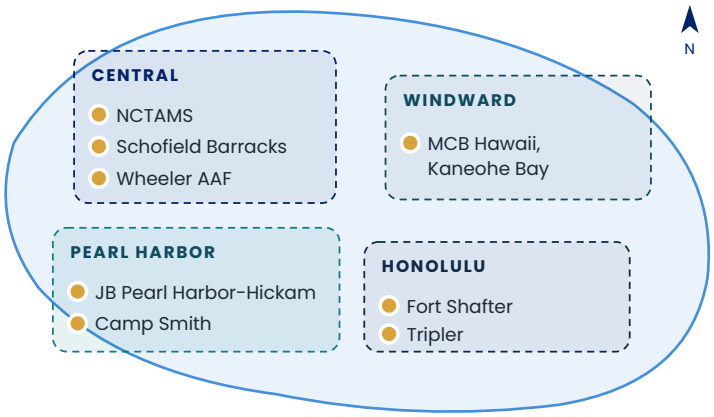
Budgeting tips

- BAH is not taxed, but lenders count it as income when you qualify for a VA loan.
- Your BAH does not have to cover the full house payment. Many families add part of base pay; others choose a home whose total payment sits at or below BAH. Decide your comfort level before you shop.
- Living on post? Military housing generally takes your BAH in place of rent, so compare the full cost of each choice (page 6).

INSTALLATIONS AND NEIGHBORHOODS

Live in the same cluster as your duty station

Oahu's installations sit in four clusters. Choosing a home in the same cluster as your duty station is the single biggest thing you can do to shorten your commute.



Schematic, not to scale



Kaneohe Bay on the Windward side. Photo: Lester A. Salazar.

Installation	Who is there (examples)	Neighborhoods to look at
Schofield Barracks Central, ~16 mi NW of Honolulu	25th Infantry Division; 8th Theater Sustainment Command	Wahiawa, Mililani Town, Mililani Mauka, Waipio, Launani Valley
Wheeler Army Airfield Next to Schofield	U.S. Army Garrison Hawaii HQ; Hawaii Air National Guard units	Wahiawa, Mililani, Waipio
NCTAMS Pacific Wahiawa	Navy communications	Wahiawa, Mililani, Waialua
Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam Leeward Oahu	Pacific Air Forces; Submarine Force Pacific; Navy Region Hawaii; shipyard	Aiea, Pearl City, Waipahu, Ewa Beach, Ewa Gentry, Ocean Pointe, Kapolei, Salt Lake
Camp H.M. Smith Halawa	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command HQ; Marine Forces Pacific; SOC Pacific	Aiea Heights, Halawa, Pearl City, Salt Lake, Moanalua
Fort Shafter West of downtown	U.S. Army Pacific; Army Corps of Engineers Honolulu District	Salt Lake, Moanalua, Kalihi Valley, Aiea
Tripler Army Medical Center Moanalua ridge	Army medical center	Salt Lake, Moanalua, Aiea, Kalihi Valley
Marine Corps Base Hawaii Kaneohe Bay, Windward	3rd Marine Regiment; HSM-37	Kailua, Kaneohe, Enchanted Lake, Ahuimanu

Source: Hawaii DBEDT, Quick Defense Facts (Tripler location from general knowledge). Neighborhood suggestions are our local guidance, not an official list. Map is schematic and not to scale.

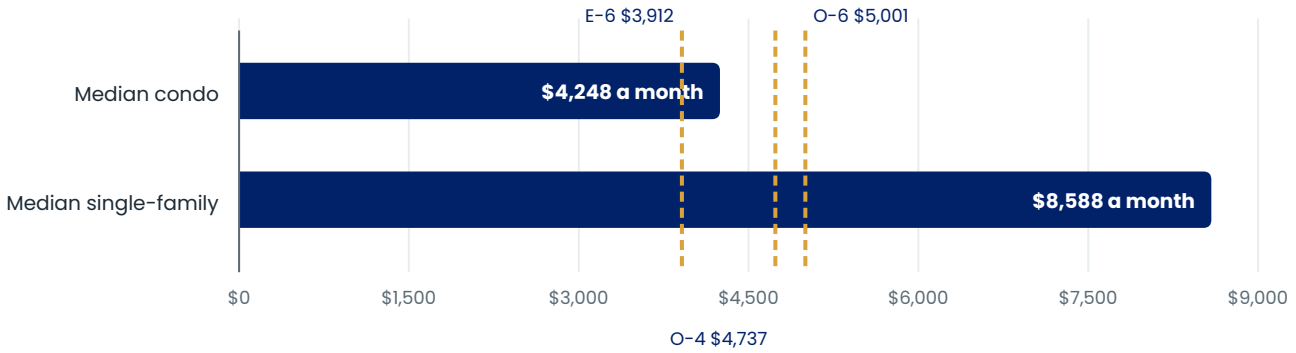
What it means: commutes depend heavily on the H-1, H-2 and H-3 freeways and time of day. Before you write an offer, drive (or have us video-drive) the route at your real report time.

COST OF BUYING VS. RENTING

A median condo sits near BAH; a median house does not

At today's rates, a median-priced Oahu condo with 0% down costs about $4,248 a month all in, close to an E-6's BAH; a median single-family home costs about $8,588, well above any BAH rate.

Estimated monthly cost vs. 2026 BAH with dependents



Monthly cost, VA loan, 0% down, first use	Condo	Single-family
Purchase price (Oct. 2026 Oahu median)	$499,000	$1,150,000
VA funding fee, 2.15%, financed	$10,728.50	$24,725
Loan amount	$509,728.50	$1,174,725
Principal and interest at 7.28%, 30 years	$3,487.63	$8,037.61
Property tax, after $120,000 home exemption	$110.54	$300.42
Insurance (illustrative assumption)	$50	$250
HOA / maintenance fee (illustrative assumption)	$600	$0
Estimated monthly total	**$4,248.17**	**$8,588.03**

Prices: Honolulu Board of REALTORS October 2026 medians as reported by the Star-Advertiser. Rate: Freddie Mac PMMS 30-year fixed average, Nov. 19, 2026; VA rates often differ, so use your lender's quote. Payment = $L \times r(1+r)^{360} / ((1+r)^{360} - 1)$, $r = 0.0728/12$. Tax = (price - $120,000) × $3.50 per $1,000 ÷ 12, assuming assessed value equals price (City and County of Honolulu, tax year 2026-27). Insurance and HOA are placeholders, not market data.

What it means: in the condo example the first payment includes about $3,092 of interest and $395 of principal, so equity builds slowly at first. Because selling has costs too, buying tends to fit best when you expect a longer tour or plan to keep the home as a rental when you PCS. A lender and a CPA can tailor this to you.

INBOUND: BUYING A HOME ON OAHU

You can buy before you land

Start the loan and the search as soon as you have orders, so you can close near your report date instead of paying for temporary lodging longer than you need to.

1 **Orders in hand** — 90 to 120 days out
2 **Searching** — 60 to 90 days out
3 **Under contract** — 30 to 60 days out
4 **Closing** — Around your arrival

1. Orders in hand

- Request your COE and get VA pre-approved; send us the letter.
- Video call with us to set budget, commute and must-haves.
- Ask your housing office about on-post wait times and temporary lodging entitlements.

2. Searching

- Custom MLS search; listings as they hit the market.
- Live video tours; we drive your commute at report time.
- Review HOA documents, leasehold vs. fee simple, and flood zone before you offer.

3. Under contract

- Sign by e-signature; wire the deposit to escrow (always confirm wiring instructions by phone with escrow).
- Home inspection, termite inspection and VA appraisal.
- Arrange insurance and, if needed, a power of attorney.

4. Closing

- Sign in person, with a mobile notary off island, or by POA.
- Final walkthrough by video if needed; keys when you land.

Power of attorney tips

- Use a specific POA that names the property, rather than a general POA, and send a draft to escrow and the lender for approval before it is signed.
- Base legal offices can prepare and notarize POAs. Allow time for the original to reach escrow if it must be recorded.

Inbound checklist

- [ ] Certificate of Eligibility (COE)
- [ ] VA pre-approval letter
- [ ] Copy of PCS orders
- [ ] Report date and duty station confirmed
- [ ] Commute route checked at report time
- [ ] POA approved by escrow and lender (if needed)
- [ ] Homeowners or condo (HO-6) insurance
- [ ] Utilities, internet and mail forwarding
- [ ] HHG delivery date coordinated with closing

OUTBOUND: SELLING BEFORE YOU PCS

Start 90 to 120 days before your move

Starting early gives you time to price from a CMA, prepare the home, and close on a date that fits your packing schedule.

1 **Orders in hand** — 90 to 120 days out
2 **Prepare** — 60 to 90 days out
3 **List and negotiate** — 45 to 75 days out
4 **Close** — On or after departure

1. Orders in hand

- Ask us for a Comparative Market Analysis (CMA) and estimated net sheet.
- Decide: sell, or keep and rent (page 9).
- Ask a CPA about your gain exclusion and Hawaii withholding.

2. Prepare

- Repairs, touch-up paint, yard and declutter; we coordinate vendors if you are deployed or TDY.
- Photos and video tour while the home is still furnished.
- Complete the Seller's Real Property Disclosure Statement.

3. List and negotiate

- Launch on the MLS and our website; showings continue after you move out.
- Review offers with closing dates matched to your HHG pack-out.

4. Close

- Sign early in Hawaii, with a mobile notary at your next duty station, or by POA.
- We handle the final walkthrough, keys and utility shutoffs.

Tax points to raise with your CPA

- **Home sale exclusion.** Up to $250,000 of gain ($500,000 married filing jointly) can be excluded if you owned and lived in the home 2 of the last 5 years. Service members on qualified official extended duty (stationed 50+ miles away or in government quarters under orders) can elect to suspend the 5-year period for up to 10 years. Source: IRS Publication 523.
- **HARPTA withholding.** When a nonresident of Hawaii sells Hawaii real property, the buyer generally must withhold 7.25% of the sales price unless an exemption or withholding certificate (Form N-288B) applies. Many service members keep their legal residence in another state, so ask early. Withholding is a prepayment, not the final tax. Source: Hawaii DOTAX, Form N-288 instructions.

Outbound checklist

- [ ] Copy of PCS orders and report date
- [ ] CMA and estimated net sheet reviewed
- [ ] Mortgage payoff statement requested
- [ ] HOA resale documents ordered
- [ ] Seller's disclosure completed
- [ ] POA approved by escrow (if needed)
- [ ] CPA consulted on exclusion and HARPTA
- [ ] Forwarding address and contact plan

KEEP AND RENT

Owning your Oahu home from afar

Keeping your home as a long-term rental can work well, but it makes you a Hawaii landlord: you will need a GET license, a Hawaii income tax filing, and a plan for management while you are away.

Decide with numbers

- We can prepare a rental analysis with local rent comps, net operating income and cash flow.
- Compare it with your mortgage, HOA, insurance, property tax and a management fee.
- Your VA entitlement stays tied up while the loan is open; ask your lender how it affects your next VA purchase.

Hawaii taxes and licenses

- Long-term rentals (180+ consecutive days) need a GET license, G-45 and G-49 returns, and rental income on Form N-11 or N-15.
- GET on rent is 4.5% (4% state + 0.5% county surcharge); the most you may pass on is 4.712%.
- Rentals under 180 days also owe TAT, and Oahu's short-term rental zoning is strict and has changed repeatedly since 2022. Plan on long-term tenants; talk with us before advertising anything shorter.

Sources: Hawaii DOTAX, Renting Residential Real Property; Tax Facts 37-1.

Property tax when you move out

$3,605 / yr
$1.15M home, owner-occupied: ($1,150,000 - $120,000) × $3.50 per $1,000

$5,710 / yr
Same home as a rental (Residential A): $1M × $4.00 + $150,000 × $11.40 per $1,000

Once the home is no longer your principal residence, the home exemption ends; tell the Real Property Assessment Division. Homes assessed at $1,000,000 or more without a home exemption fall into Residential A; homes under $1,000,000 stay in the Residential class at $3.50.

Source: City and County of Honolulu, Real Property Assessment Division, tax rates for July 1, 2026 to June 30, 2027.

Leases and the SCRA

- **If you are the tenant:** the Servicemembers Civil Relief Act lets you end a residential lease signed before you received PCS orders (or deployment orders of 90+ days) with written notice plus a copy of your orders. For monthly rent, termination takes effect 30 days after the next rent due date, and no early termination fee may be charged.
- **If you are the landlord:** your military tenants have the same right, so budget for possible early move-outs.

Source: 50 U.S.C. 3955.

Keep-and-rent checklist

- [ ] Rental analysis and cash flow reviewed
- [ ] Property manager selected
- [ ] Landlord insurance replaces homeowner policy
- [ ] Lender and VA questions answered
- [ ] GET license and Hawaii tax filing set up
- [ ] RPAD notified: home exemption ends
- [ ] HOA rental rules checked
- [ ] CPA consulted on depreciation and timing

RESOURCES AND SOURCES

Where to confirm the details

Topic	Source
VA loan limits and entitlement	va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/loan-limits
VA funding fee	va.gov/housing-assistance/home-loans/funding-fee-and-closing-costs
BAH rate lookup	travel.dod.mil, Basic Allowance for Housing
2026 conforming loan limits	fhfa.gov, conforming loan limit values for 2026
Honolulu property tax rates	realproperty.honolulu.gov
Hawaii GET and rental income	tax.hawaii.gov, Renting Residential Real Property
Home sale exclusion	irs.gov, Publication 523
SCRA lease termination	uscode.house.gov, 50 U.S.C. 3955
Oahu market data	Honolulu Board of REALTORS via Star-Advertiser, Nov. 7, 2026
Mortgage rates	freddiemac.com/pmms, Nov. 19, 2026
Installations	invest.hawaii.gov, Quick Defense Facts

Please note: this guide is general information as of November 24, 2026, deemed reliable but not guaranteed. It is not legal, tax or lending advice. Rates, allowances, tax rules and county ordinances change; confirm with your lender, your installation legal or housing office, a Hawaii CPA, or a Hawaii attorney before you act. Worked examples use stated assumptions and are not a loan quote. Illustrations are conceptual drawings, not photographs of any property. Photographs by Lester A. Salazar, except Mililani Mauka (Who8myfish?, public domain, via Wikimedia Commons).

Mahalo for your service, and for letting us help with your move.

Whether you are landing on Oahu or heading to your next duty station, we will make the home part of your PCS one less thing to worry about.

Lester A. Salazar, RB-23849
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